

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MONTEV 01800 021251Z
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SUBJ: SCIENCE ATTACHE PROGRAM AND GLOBAL ISSUES

REF: STATE 118666

1. SUMMARY. THE FOLLOWING COMMENTS AND OBSERVATIONS REGARDING THE DEPARTMENT'S SCIENCE ATTACHE PROGRAM AND EMERGING SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY ISSUES IN URUGUAY, REFLECT THE COUNTRY'S RELATIVELY LOW LEVEL DEVELOPMENT IN SCIENTIFIC R&D. LACKING A SCIENTIFIC INFRASTRUCTURE AND WORKING WITH LIMITED RESOURCES, FOR URUGUAY AND QUESTION OF R&D AND OF INTEREST IN INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC ISSUES IS LARGELY MOOT. HOWEVER, FOUR URUGUAYAN ISSUES MAY BE OF MARGINAL POLICY OR COMMERCIAL INTEREST TO THE U.S.: (1) NUCLEAR ENERGY TECHNOLOGY; (2) ALTERNATIVE ENERGY TECHNOLOGIES; (3) OCEANS; (4) SATELLITE COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY. END SUMMARY.

2. THIS EMBASSY'S SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY REPORTING IS DONE LARGELY BY THE JUNIOR ECONOMIC/COMMERCIAL OFFICER. GIVEN THE RELATIVELY LOW LEVEL OF SCIENTIFIC/TECHNOLOGICAL RESEARCH
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PAGE 02 MONTEV 01800 021251Z

AND DEVELOPMENT IN URUGUAY, WE DO NOT RECOMMEND THE ASSIGNMENT OF A SCIENCE ATTACHE TO THIS POST. HOWEVER, WE DO ENCOURAGE SPECIAL SHORT-TERM TRAINING AND BRIEFINGS FOR GENERALIST OFFICERS BEING ASSIGNED HERE TO PROVIDE A SUBSTANTIVE FOUNDATION FROM WHICH TO WORK AS WELL AS TO SENSITIZE THEM TO THE INTER-RELATIONSHIP OF GLOBAL SCIENTIFIC ISSUES AND OUR FOREIGN POLICY.

3. URUGUAY'S SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY IS SMALL, ITS FOCUS NARROW, ITS ORIENTATION PAROCHIAL. PARTICIPATION IN REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC FORA IS MINIMAL. URUGUAY TENDS TO GAUGE THESE ENTITIES NOT IN TERMS OF FORUMS FOR COORDINATION AND TECHNOLOGICAL COOPERATION, BUT RATHER AS ASSISTANCE VEHICLES. THE URUGUAYAN GOVERNMENT AND SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY TRADITIONALLY PREFERS TO WORK THROUGH BILATERAL TECHNOLOGICAL/SCIENTIFIC ACCORDS, MOST NOTABLY WITH ITS NEIGHBOR, ARGENTINA.

4. DR. JORGE ALVAREZ OLLONIEGO, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION BUREAU OF THE MINISTRY OF CULTURE, ATTRIBUTES URUGUAY'S LOW SCIENTIFIC CAPACITY TO THE COUNTRY'S LACK OF AN INDEPENDENT SCIENTIFIC INFRASTRUCTURE, LIMITED SCIENTIFIC RESOURCES, SCIENTISTS AND ADMINISTRATORS. ACCORDING TO ALVAREZ, THE CURRENT GOU FOCUS ON PREDOMINANTLY ECONOMIC OR POLITICAL POLICY, NARROWLY CONSTRUED, MINIMIZES OR NEGATES THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN R&D POLICY. IN THE ABSENCE OF AN ESTABLISHED POLICY, INDEPENDENT RESEARCH GROUPS, LACKING COORDINATION, ARE CONCENTRATING ON WHAT HE TERMS "ILLUSIONS OF GRANDEUR." HE ADDS THAT URUGUAY'S DILEMMA IS NOT UNIQUE IN LATIN AMERICA AND CITES WHAT HE BELIEVES ARE THREE CAUSAL AGENTS: (1) URUGUAY'S EFFECTIVE WITHDRAWAL FROM THE INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY AND INTERNATIONAL AGENCIES; (2) A LACK OF SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH COORDINATION BETWEEN THE USG LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 MONTEV 01800 021251Z

AND GOU; (3) THE WITHDRAWAL OF LATIN AMERICA FROM INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION (SIC) AND A NEW FOCUS ON BILATERAL RELATIONSHIPS. HOWEVER, HE IS QUICK TO ADD THAT IN URUGUAY'S VIEW, THE U.S., UNESCO, AND THE INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC AGENCIES ARE NOT DOING ENOUGH TO SUPPORT SCIENTIFIC R&D IN DEVELOPED AND DEVELOPING COUNTRIES.

5. AS FOR SPECIFIC SCIENTIFIC ISSUES OF IMPORTANCE TO URUGUAY AND IN WHICH THE U.S. HAS EITHER A SIGNIFICANT POLICY OR COMMERCIAL INTEREST, (PARA. 4 OF REFTTEL), THE EMBASSY SEES THE FOLLOWING, IN ORDER OF DECREASING IMPORTANCE:

--NUCLEAR ENERGY TECHNOLOGY: URUGUAY IS RELATIVELY NEW TO THE NUCLEAR ENERGY FIELD, ITS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM AIMING SOLELY AT MEETING THE COUNTRY'S FUTURE ENERGY NEEDS AFTER 1992 (APPROX.) WHEN PROJECTED HYDROELECTRIC RESOURCES WILL BE FULLY UTILIZED. THE GOU PRESENTLY HAS A 10-KW ATOMS-FOR-PEACE REACTOR (STILL NONOPERATIONL) AND IS INVESTIGATING THE PURCHASE OF A LARGE 1-3 MEGAWATT REACTOR TO BE USED FOR TEACHING, BASIC RESEARCH AND THE MANUFACTURE OF RADIOISOTOPES. THE GOU WORKS PRIMARILY WITH ARGENTINA IN NUCLEAR TECHNOLOGICAL EXCHANGE (A 1977 JOINT SCIENTIFIC AGREEMENT

BETWEEN THE GOU AND GOA HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED AND WILL GREATLY ENHANCE THE GOU PROGRAM) AND TO A LESSER DEGREE WITH IAEA WHICH PROVIDED A \$2 MILLION TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE GRANT LAST YEAR TO THE GOU.

--ALTERNATIVE ENERGY TECHNOLOGIES: THE GOU MINISTRY OF INDUSTRY AND ENERGY CONTINUES TO CONDUCT FEASIBILITY STUDIES OF WIND AND SOLAR ENERGY POTENTIALS IN URUGUAY. PRELIMINARY RESULTS ARE FAVORABLE. DEPOSITS OF URANIUM HAVE ALSO BEEN DISCOVERED IN NORTHERN URUGUAY, ALTHOUGH THE QUALITY AND EXTENT OF THESE DEPOSITS HAVE YET TO BE DETERMINED.

--OCEANS: URUGUAY POSSESSES ONE MARITIME INVESTIGATION VESSEL WHICH, ACCORDING TO ALVAREZ, IS UNDER-MANNED AND ILL-LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 04 MONTEV 01800 021251Z

EQUIPPED. ITS CREW WAS RECENTLY CALLED IN TO SERVICE TO INVESTIGATE OFF-SHORE CONTAMINATION AFFECTING MARINE LIFE-FORMS ALONG THE ATLANTIC COAST OF BRAZIL AND URUGUAY. THE URUGUAYAN MARINE SCIENTISTS WERE CAPABLE OF ONLY BASIC CHEMICAL ANALYSIS. THIS SCIENTIFIC DEFICIENCY COULD PROVE SERIOUS IN THE FUTURE, GIVEN THE GREAT FISHING POTENTIAL FOR URUGUAY IN THAT REGION, AS WELL AS IN THE RIVER PLATE WATERS CONTIGIOUS TO ARGENTINA.

--SATELLITE COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY: A PRIVATE CONSORTIUM OF URUGUAYAN TELEVISION STATIONS RECENTLY PURCHASED A SATELLITE-RECEIVING ANTENNA FOR THE RECEPTION OF TRANSMISSIONS FROM ARGENTINA. REPORTS INDICATE THAT ANTEL (THE GOU TELECOMMUNICATIONS AGENCY WILL EXPAND THIS TO A TYPE-B SATELLITE SYSTEM IN THE NEAR FUTURE. ANTEL IS ALSO INVESTIGATING THE PURCHASE OF A TYPE-A SYSTEM, TO IMPROVE BOTH NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL SERVICE

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